

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 1475

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CVIS BF HA

SUBJ: HAITIANS IN BAHAMAS

1. AT HIS REQUEST, HAITIAN CONSUL ALEXANDRE PAUL VISITED EMBASSY SEPT. 15 TO DISCUSS WHAT HE TERMED AN "IMPORTANT MATTER". AFTER CONSIDERABLE BEATING AROUND THE BUSH IT APPEARED THAT MATTER WAS TO ASCERTAIN U.S. VIEW ON FOLLOWING HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION. IF A HAITIAN NATIONAL ENROUTE THROUGH BAHAMAS TO ENTER ILLEGALLY THE U.S. WERE APPREHENDED IN TERRITORY OF THE BAHAMAS AND FOUND TO HAVE ILLEGALLY ENTERED THE BAHAMAS, WOULD USG HAVE ANY PROBLEM IF GCOB, RATHER THAN DEPORTING HAITIAN TO HAITI, SIMPLY FINED INDIVIDUAL AND ALLOWED HIM OR HER TO REMAIN IN BAHAMAS? PAUL WAS TOLD THAT WHAT BAHAMIAN AUTHORITIES DID IN SUCH A CASE WAS FOR BAHAMIANS TO DECIDE THAT USG LACKED JURISDICTION AND WOULD HAVE NO PREFERENCE. THIS RESPONSE WAS THEN CONFIRMED WITH INS AT THE NASSAU PRECLEARANCE UNIT. PAUL THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HOPED TO WORK OUT AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE APPROPRIATE BAHAMAIN AUTHORITIES TO INSTITUTE FINES IN SUCH CASES RATHER THAN DEPORTATION BUT FIRST WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT "U.S. WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION". ACCORDING TO HIM HE WAS CONFIDENT OF SUCCESS BECAUSE "BAHAMAS NEEDED HAITIAN LABOR". SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION WOULD ALSO BE BENEFICIAL TO HAITI AS EVERY HAITIAN ALLOWED TO STAY WOULD BE "ONE LESS MOUTH FOR HAITI TO FEED." LIKEWISE, THIS APPROACH WOULD AUGMENT BAHAMIAN TREASURY AND AT SAME TIME RELIEVE GCOB OF COST OF DEPORTATION.

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2. COMMENT: THERE IS A VERY SLIGHT POSSIBILITY THAT PAUL

MIGHT BE SUCCESSFUL IN HIS ENDEAVOR DESPITE BAHAMIAN PUBLIC'S GROWING CONCERN FOR INCREASING NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS HERE, A CONCERN WHICH HAS INCREASED IN PROPORTION TO RISING UNEMPLOYMENT. HIS CONNECTIONS WITH BAHAMIAN DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION, MRS. BARBARA PIERRE (SISTER OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ARTHUR HANNA) ARE OBVIOUSLY QUITE CLOSE AND THE SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE GOSSIP IN NASSAU. THE THOUGHT OCCURS THAT A SCHEME SUCH AS PAUL'S WOULD BE EVEN MORE PALATABLE TO BAHAMIAN DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION IF ILLEGAL HAITIANS IN BAHAMAS FOUND THAT BAHAMIAN AUTHORITIES WERE LAX OR LESS THAN VIGILANT IN PREVENTING THEM TO CONTINUE THEIR ONWARD PASSAGE TO THE U.S. WERE THAT THE CASE, THEN PAUL AND HAITIAN GOVERNMENT COULD RELIEVE THEMSELVES OF MORE CITIZENS, BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT COULD COLLECT FINES AND AT SAME TIME NOT BE BURDENED WITH DEPORTATION COSTS OR INCREASED NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND USG WOULD BE LEFT HOLDING BAG, OR IN THIS CASE, HAITIANS. ONCE IN U.S. WE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EITHER ALLOWING THEM TO STAY OR DEFRAIVING THE EXPENSE OF DEPORTATION TO HAITI AS BAHAMAS WOULD MOST LIKELY REFUSE REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION ON GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE NOT LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE BAHAMAS. WHILE THIS IS PERHAPS TOO CYNICAL A VIEW, IT IS NEVERTHELESS WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE CAST OF CHARACTERS. IN ANY EVENT, EMBASSY WILL BE MONITORING CLOSELY REPORTS FROM INS CONCERNING HAITIANS ARRIVING U.S. MAINLAND FROM BAHAMAS AND IF A PATTERN BECOMES APPARENT, WE WILL THEN HAVE TO CONSIDER WHAT, IF ANYTHING, CAN BE DONE.

TAYLOR

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